

1828

Claim 12 (currently amended): ~~A support disc in accordance with claim 1,~~
ceramic heat conductor support disc for supporting an electrical heating element
for electrically heated industrial furnace installations, said support disc
comprising: a disc body having a predetermined thickness; a center aperture
having a central axis lying parallel to a longitudinal axis of the disc body and of a
heating element; at least one intermediate aperture located between said center
aperture and an outer periphery of the disc body; wherein the disc includes at
least one elongated opening extending from said periphery to at least one of said
intermediate apertures; wherein each elongated opening extends through the
entire thickness of said disc and the number of elongated openings is less than
the number of intermediate apertures; wherein the at least one elongated
opening extends from an outwardly-positioned intermediate aperture to an
inwardly-positioned intermediate aperture, relative to the disc periphery; and
wherein the at least one elongated opening serves to reduce thermal stresses
produced within the support disc during heating of the heating element to reduce
thermally induced disc cracking during exposure of the support disc to furnace
operating temperatures and to thermal cycling.

Claim 13 (currently amended): ~~A support disc in accordance with claim 1,~~
ceramic heat conductor support disc for supporting an electrical heating element for
electrically heated industrial furnace installations, said support disc comprising: a
disc body having a predetermined thickness; a center aperture having a central axis
lying parallel to a longitudinal axis of the disc body and of a heating element; at